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## Narrative and Frame Analysis: Disentangling and Refining Two Close Relatives by Means of a Large Infrastructural Technology Case

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### Key words:

narrative analysis;  
frame analysis;  
narrative;  
storytelling; frame;  
framing;  
comparative  
framework;  
methods  
comparison

**Abstract:** Social science literature frequently conflates the concepts "narrative" and "frame." We argue not only that using the terms interchangeably is conceptually imprecise but also that analyses based on them actually produce different kinds of knowledge. A systematic disentanglement, contrast and refinement of both concepts benefits from a comparative framework applied to the same case. We provide both. The illustrative case is a large infrastructural coastal management project. The key difference between narratives and frames turns out to be on the respective scale level: frames are actors' perspectives, whereas narratives are the expressed products of those perspectives. Being the mode of expression of one's perspective, we pinpoint "storytelling" as the link between narratives and framing and the origin of the conceptual confusion. Our framework clarifies the terminological usage and enables an informed method choice based on the desired kind of knowledge. With this clearer terminological understanding in mind, we encourage researchers to let the requirements and idiosyncrasies of their specific research interest and context inform their methods choice and to view the comparative framework as a heuristic rather than a deductive scheme.

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## 1. Introduction

Narratives and frames are popular concepts in the social sciences (OLLERENSHAW & CRESWELL, 2002; SCHEFF, 2005). Over the years, different types of methods have been developed that lean upon them. However, browsing the methodological literature, it is not at all clear how the two concepts and thus the methods using them differ conceptually. A [Scopus](#) search through paper abstracts of various qualitative research journals looking for "frame OR framing" AND "narrative" reveals a convoluted usage of the two concepts.<sup>1</sup> For example, narratives may actively frame an issue (BUSANICH, McGANNON & SCHINKE, 2016; KORDASIEWICZ, 2014; VINCENT & CROSSMAN, 2009); articles, research participants, or collective voice may frame a narrative (ARNETT, 2002; DOWNE, 2007; SHARP-GRIER & MARTIN, 2016); a "narrative frame" may be a sub-type of frames (BORCHARD, 2017); and narratives may be used to analyze frames (VANWYNSBERGHE, 2001). On the one hand, this usage demonstrates the closeness of the concepts. On the other hand, such terminological ambiguity obscures the fact that different kinds of knowledge are to be gained from a narrative analysis vis-à-vis a frame analysis. In this article, we unravel this terminological ambiguity. [1]

We understand "narratives" in the Aristotelian way, as discussed by BRUNER (1991), GEE (1985), POLKINGHORNE (1988) and WAGENAAR (2011), as a course of action with a beginning, a middle (often a complication) and an end (often a resolution) used by humans to make sense of experiences. Narratives include a chronicle, a sequence of events, as well as the interpretation of these events' meaning (SANDERCOCK, 2003). Our conceptualization of "frame" partially follows REIN and SCHÖN (1996, p.88), who refer to a frame as 1. a scaffolding, 2. a boundary, 3. a schema of interpretation or 4. a story. We also find the confusion which we want to disentangle in this seminal definition of policy frames. Hence, our understanding of the frame concept relies on 1.-3. of REIN and SCHÖN's definition. These concepts show different facets of what frames do. "Framing" as used here, means "to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (ENTMAN, 1993, p.52). [2]

Using these definitions as an anchor point to make explicit how we have viewed the two concepts in our analyses, we intend to shed light on the conceptual chaos and to help researchers in making an informed choice when they are choosing a method. We do so by showing and comparing the methodological characteristics of one narrative analysis (BONTJE & SLINGER, 2017) and one frame analysis (AUKE, LULOFS & BRESSERS, 2017) applied in the same research setting. The aim of the comparison is to analyze similarities and differences between the two methods and clarify the research aims for which they are suited. The

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1 The search returned 31 hits in the following journals: *Qualitative Inquiry* (19), *Qualitative Research in Sport Exercise and Health* (4), *Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise* (2), *Qualitative Research Journal* (2), *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* (1), *Qualitative Research* (1), *Qualitative Sociology Review* (1).

following research question guides the comparison: What are the methodological and methodical differences between narrative analysis and framing analysis? While versions of the methods in question have often been analyzed separately (e.g., DAVID, ATUN, FILLE & MONTEROLA, 2011; OLLERENSHAW & CRESWELL, 2002) or compared to other methods (PATTERSON, 2018), direct comparisons of framing and narrative analyses have not yet been attempted.<sup>2</sup> A reason for this may be the contextuality of methods, especially for research carried out within an interpretive paradigm, and a subsequent claim of incomparability due to their situated uniqueness. However, this holds only partially and through the unreflective adoption of this position researchers are in danger of getting stuck in "the predicament of epistemological relativism" (DUDLEY, 1999, p.55; see also SCHÖN & REIN, 1994). While it is true that many choices in the development of the methods, obscured by their (chrono-)logical ex-post description, are due to a specific research context and the position and role of the researcher, comparing them has practical value for researchers when developing their research approach. [3]

We argue that the construction of a comparative framework is necessary to compare interpretive methods, while respecting their contextuality. First, a comparative framework has to exceed the empirical level and include the methodological (BAŠKARADA & KORONIOS, 2018). Second, the value of including empirical aspects of the specific methods in the comparison is of a typological nature, i.e., to see how methodological commitments can materialize in specific research situations (namely "What types of these analyses are possible in practice?"). Third, it is useful to compare the evolution of the analyses in the same empirical case to see how methodological choices result in different analyses within the same policy context. In the following, we describe the case to which the narrative analysis and framing analysis were applied (Section 2). We then explain the construction of the comparative framework (Section 3). In Section 4, the methods are compared based on the framework, followed by a discussion (Section 5) and conclusions (Section 6). [4]

## 2. A Large Infrastructural Technology Case: The Sand Engine

Over the centuries, Dutch coastal management flourished thanks to continual organizational and technological transformation. While the Dutch water authorities are some of the oldest governance structures still present globally, the last century has seen the development of a complex centrally-financed, decentrally-executed coastal management system involving not only the water authorities but also all layers of governance, the national public works agency, private businesses, NGO's, and citizens organizations. Although innovation was at the core of the Dutch endeavor of fending off the waters of the North Sea (VAN KONINGSVELD, MULDER, STIVE, VAN DER VALK & VAN DER WECK, 2008), routine ways of working including engineering data and models were established

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2 As THOMAS (2012) pointed out, it must not be a choice of one or the other. Rather, narrative inquiry can be a useful and insightful complement to other methods. A similar argument can be made for frame/framing analysis. This may hold especially given our claim that the two methods produce different kinds of knowledge.

simultaneously. This led to a push and pull between "progressives" urging the further innovation of the coastal management repertoire and "conservatives" insisting on the relative certainty of proven technology. This has frequently led to "intractable policy controversies" (SCHÖN & REIN, 1994) where conservatives and progressives fought over which coastal models, data or facts were valid, depending on their worldview. And the case of the Sand Engine was no different. For example, it was difficult for some to wrap their heads around how an eroding coastal structure made of sand could defend the coastline from water eating away at it. [5]

The Sand Engine was a coastal management project carried out in the Netherlands in 2011 (Illustration 1). It is an artificial peninsula at the coast of the province of South-Holland constructed with 21 million m<sup>3</sup> sand. It is designed to erode slowly, thereby supplying sand to a large part of the South-Holland coast for about 20 years. The Sand Engine represents an innovative way of nourishing an eroding coast (STIVE et al., 2013), replacing smaller and more frequent nourishments in more locations. In addition to claims of cost saving advantages and reduced long term ecological impact, the peninsula provides space for recreational activities (such as hiking, surfing) as well as for characteristic flora and fauna while its erosion is progressing. As such, the Sand Engine is a result of the decades-long "ecological turn" in Dutch coastal management: the rise of a professional organization involving non-engineering, ecologist scientists and the technological exploration of more nature-friendly coastal management solutions (DISCO, 2002).



Illustration 1: The Sand Engine mega-nourishment seen from the South-West (Rijkswaterstaat) [6]

Its novelty forbade the Sand Engine to become a full-fledged coastal protection scheme. Thus, it was labeled a full-scale "pilot project" and underwent extensive monitoring. An interdisciplinary research project called "NatureCoast," which

provided insights into the physical, biological and chemical characteristics as well as its socio-political context, was built around it. The present article is built on results from NatureCoast's governance research, which consists of framing research for understanding the integration of mega-nourishment schemes into the Dutch coastal management repertoire (AUKES, 2017; AUKES et al., 2017), narrative research for understanding the development of pilot projects in their actor-networks (BONTJE, 2017; BONTJE & SLINGER, 2017) and a study on the use of the ecosystem services concept in strategic decision making (VAN OUDENHOVEN et al., 2018). In both AUKES' and BONTJE's research the Sand Engine figured centrally as a case study. The manifest and latent debates between actors from the policy domain, engineering businesses and society about the desired purpose of coastal protection and the necessity of extension of functionality of coastal structures made the Sand Engine a typical case for understanding the ways of worldmaking of those actors (GOODMAN, 1978). AUKES' and BONTJE's retrospective, interpretive analyses not only allowed a reconstruction of actors' frames and narratives, but also of how the interaction between their frames shaped the argumentative development of the case in terms of the decisions taken, the project design, and the "storification" of individual perception. [7]

As LANDMAN (2012) and RIESSMAN (2008) observed, many analytical features of narratives and frames can become part of a researcher's strategy, producing a "continuum of approaches" (RIESSMAN, 2008, p.5) for studying a specific research question. The work of AUKES and BONTJE can be found on this continuum. More importantly, having studied the same case, focusing on how a new technology challenges existing governance structures and is applied as a pilot project, represents a unique opportunity to discuss the conceptual differences between the two concepts (frames & narratives) and the accompanying methods. [8]

### **3. Constructing a Framework for Comparing Methods**

A comparison of interpretive methods requires explicit systematic juxtaposition of the methods in question (YANOW & SCHWARTZ-SHEA, 2014). However, the narrative (BONTJE, 2017; BONTJE & SLINGER, 2017) and framing (AUKES 2017; AUKES et al., 2017) analyses compared here are both case- and context-dependent, as both have been applied to the Sand Engine case. On the one hand, these approaches were tailor-made for the research setting. On the other hand, they may not be transplanted one-to-one to other settings. In other words, SCHWARTZ-SHEA's (2014) warning about the generalizability of conclusions also applies to methods. Instead, evaluating the usefulness of methods or aspects thereof for their own situation is up to the readers themselves. Nevertheless, this does not preclude a meaningful comparison of methods within an interpretive paradigm. [9]

Empirical comparison is a frequently applied and popular method in many empirical social science disciplines (e.g., ADCOCK, 2006; JILKE, MEULEMAN & VAN DE WALLE, 2014; NISSEN, 1998). However, empirical comparisons rely on

social-scientific theories as frameworks, which are inappropriate for comparing methods. Hence, a framework to compare methods must be found outside social-scientific theories and include aspects of philosophy of science. Looking further, methods producing quantitative data may be compared by means of statistical analyses (DAVID et al., 2011; GUEST, NAMEY, TAYLOR, ELEY & McKENNA, 2017; PRIEDE & FARRALL, 2011). Although quantifying results to simplify the method comparison is tempting, such an approach is inherently difficult for interpretive scholars to accept (WEED, 2008). Instead, a structured comparison of qualitative-interpretive methods that follows a framework of criteria presented, e.g., in tabular (STARKS & TRINIDAD, 2007; WEED, 2008) or typological (OPDENAKKER, 2006) form is more appropriate. The analysis of qualitative methods generally involves (semi-)structured in-depth textual discussions of advantages and disadvantages at a certain moment in the comparative process (DAVID et al., 2011; JOHNSON, CARSON-APSTEIN, BANDEROB & MACAULAY-RETTINO, 2017; MERCER, 2010; OPDENAKKER, 2006; PRIEDE & FARRALL, 2011; STARKS & TRINIDAD, 2007). [10]

Thus, the comparative framework developed for this article draws on two sources: 1. the framework proposed by STARKS and TRINIDAD (2007) comparing three qualitative approaches; 2. additional elements from philosophy of the social sciences (Table 1). Where possible and applicable, we preserved original terminology for parsimony. Particularly, we preserved the criteria of "history," "interviewing strategy," "analytic method" and "product." The framework presented here is more explicit on aspects of philosophy, specifying: ontological and epistemological premises, the phenomenon to be researched, the type of knowledge on which the method focuses and the suitability of the method for other philosophical stances ("epistemological traveling"). In Table 1, the criteria and questions asked to derive the relevant information from the methods are listed, and the expected information is specified. In the following, the answers to the questions posed in Table 1 are presented in a results table (Table 2) and are discussed in-depth to find similarities and differences (Section 4).

Criterion	Question of interest	Expected details
History	Which scientific field does the method originate in?	The field of origin, as well as important literature sources
Ontological premises	What is the status of reality which the method presupposes?	Singularity or plurality of realities
Epistemological premises	In what way does the method produce knowledge about reality/realities?	General laws, patterns, cumulation, situatedness, correlations etc.
Phenomenon	What research subject does the method set out to study?	Level of analysis, individual vs. organizational/institutional, agency vs. structure etc.

Criterion	Question of interest	Expected details
Objective	What is the objective of the method?	Purpose of the method
Research question	What is the research question involved?	Research question
Concepts	What are the method's core operative concepts?	Elements of the method necessary to understand the concept as well as the analysis
Interviewee selection	Who was selected to be interviewed?	Reasons for selecting group of interviewees
Interviewing strategy	How are interviews approached?	Type of interviews, type of questions
Analytic method	How does the researcher analyze data?	Steps connecting the data with the concepts
Product	What shape does the analytical result take?	Presentation, appearance of results
Knowledge focus	What does the analytical result tell us about the method's scope?	The effect of the method in developing more understanding of empirical situations or the concept itself
Limitations	How broadly can the method be applied?	Limitations concerning policy field or type of situations
Epistemological traveling	Is the method limited to the philosophical stance from which it was developed?	Differences if applied in different epistemological contexts

Table 1: Comparison framework, including name of criterion, question of interest and expected details [11]

#### 4. Narrative Analysis vs. Framing Analysis

Before we appraise the narrative and framing method as BONTJE and SLINGER (2017) and AUKES et al. (2017) applied them to the Sand Engine case by means of the comparative framework, we give a brief overview of the methods and results of those studies.<sup>3</sup> BONTJE and SLINGER (2017) focused on understanding the learning processes of actors involved in pilot projects, such as the Sand Engine. As people continually construct narratives to organize their own experiences (POLKINGHORNE, 1988), one way to incorporate learning from individual actors is to encourage them to relate their experiences in narrative form. One of the retrospective research questions was: what can we learn from actors' "storified" experiences (BONTJE & SLINGER, 2017, p.187) about the

<sup>3</sup> For detailed descriptions of the methods see the discussion below and the original sources BONTJE and SLINGER (2017) and AUKES et al. (2017).



process of realizing an innovative coastal project? BONTJE and SLINGER's narrative analysis compared the sequences, duration, spatial orientation, and the different problem-solving qualities actors attributed to the Sand Engine. This resulted in three overarching "biographical" narratives. The Sand Engine was seen either as 1. something (unknown) requiring implementation, 2. an iconic departure from usual practice or 3. a stage in an incremental coastal development process. The narratives are multi-faceted, comprising so many ingredients that "there is something in it for (almost) everybody" (p.195). Yet, all three narratives stress the importance of coastal safety, which is undisputed in the Netherlands. The "iconic departure" (p.192) narrative was found to be the dominant narrative among Dutch coastal management actors. To come to these results, BONTJE and SLINGER purposefully selected 15 respondents with a stake in the Sand Engine and carried out narrative interviews with them between January and July 2014. Based on the concepts of "chronicle" and "emplotment," narrative sequences for each interview were constructed (p.190). Comparison of these narrative sequences led to the three afore-mentioned clusters of narratives. The narratives were validated during a conference devoted to the Sand Engine in 2014. [12]

AUKES et al. (2017) used the concept of framing to explore and strengthen the link between interpretive policy analysis and "policy entrepreneurship," introduced by KINGDON (2014, p.122). The research question in this work was: How did an interpretive policy entrepreneur make use of framing interaction mechanisms to implement the innovative coastal management technology by realizing the Sand Engine? Specifically, argumentative interactions between policy-relevant actors were reconstructed to understand why the mega-sand nourishment as a policy choice caught on among them. The categorization of argumentative interactions into five frame-convergent and frame-divergent mechanisms led to one actor who was more proficient in framing the Sand Engine's innovative character: an interpretive policy entrepreneur. In that way, the project could be fed into other actors' frames. AUKES et al. (2017) interviewed 14 policy-relevant actors the first of which were purposefully selected. Later, snowball sampling led them to the following respondents. They analyzed "decisive moments" in respondents' accounts that indicated argumentative struggles and frame shifts (p.9). After reconstructing the project timeline, events were associated with framing mechanisms (DEWULF & BOUWEN, 2012). AUKES et al. (2017) also proposed to call actors "interpretive policy entrepreneurs" when they are proficient at initiating "meaningful frame-convergent framing moves" (p.10). [13]

Applying the comparative framework to the two methods by BONTJE (2017), BONTJE and SLINGER (2017) and AUKES (2017), AUKES et al. (2017), only few similarities may be found (Table 2). Their rootedness in constructivist ontology is the sole point of agreement. In fact, despite the seeming proximity of the concepts, there is much less agreement between the methods than would be expected. This observation warrants a closer look at the methods' structure and why they differ. We continue with a point-by-point discussion of the comparative framework's criteria in the empirical applications to the Sand Engine.

Table 2: Comparison of one type of narrative analysis (BONTJE, 2017; BONTJE & SLINGER, 2017) with one type of framing analysis (AUKES, 2017; AUKES et al., 2017). Click here to download the [PDF](#) file. [14]

#### 4.1 Ontological and epistemological premises

Both methods' applications rely on a constructivist understanding of the world. The researchers as mediated through their method assume that every individual's contextuality shapes their view of the world. Individuals' communication about this view, be it through narrative or frame, will take different forms due to this. The approaches also agree on the fact that the knowledge they generate is situated in their respective contexts and cannot be used for accumulating generalized, contextually dis-embedded knowledge. However, BONTJE (2017) and BONTJE and SLINGER's (2017) deductive narrative method looks for historical "explanations" of events; a type of explanation that is unrelated to establishing causal relations between independent and dependent variables. Rather, the chosen stance comes closer to what SCHWARTZ-SHEA and YANOW (2012) called "constituent causality," which "engages how humans conceive of their worlds, the language they use to describe them" (p.52). The ways in which humans describe their conception of the research setting—their narratives—exist side-by-side, as is common in the domain of historical reconstruction of events (BURKE, 1992; McCULLAGH, 2000). This equal side-by-side of narratives enables their balanced evaluation and the interpretation of differences in historical explanation. While the framing approach developed by AUKES (2017) and AUKES et al. (2017) also relies on a constitutive understanding of causality, it benefits from the perceived and communicated intersections between actors' respective realities. Insofar, the epistemological premises of AUKES and AUKES et al.'s framing analysis differ from BONTJE (2017) and BONTJE and SLINGER's (2017) narrative analysis. The former also includes the framing interactions between actors and their perceived realities. While actors' respective accounts of the case stand side-by-side, the inclusion of framing interactions opens up an analytical view on argumentative power struggles going on amongst actors. [15]

#### 4.2 Phenomenon, objectives and research question

In their narrative analysis, BONTJE and SLINGER (2017) focused on the individual experiences of involved actors to reconstruct the views on sequences of events. On a more abstract level, they sought for the similarities between individuals' narratives. Such an objective tells us about the way in which aspects of realities are shared among individuals to help us understand certain discourses or "moods" in society. This perspective is situated on a higher scale level than the framing analysis. By means of the framing analysis, AUKES et al. (2017) studied the argumentative interactions between actors to discover the intersections between the perceived realities and how these lead to frame conflicts. Additionally, this approach enabled AUKES et al. to examine how framing interactions occur with the intention of mitigating frame conflicts and increasing an epistemic community. Such a micro-level approach supports understanding the sometimes erratic, haphazard evolution of policy projects. Here, both types of

analyses could play complementary roles. Whereas the narrative analysis provided a view of the societal uptake of a technology or innovation, the framing analysis revealed the politics of localized decision-making. Together, the two types of methods can provide a perspective on successful socio-technical innovation. [16]

The empirical objectives of the two methods follow from their epistemological premises. BONTJE and SLINGER (2017) aimed to learn from the narratives about the case itself, which corresponds with the premise of understanding the differences between the narrative accounts. The argumentative power struggles, which AUKES et al. (2017) found at the intersections of actors' perceived realities, informed the concrete objective of the framing analysis method, as they viewed those struggles as indicative of the eventual policy choice. [17]

The respective choices in epistemological premises are also reflected in the research questions which guide the publications describing the two methods. BONTJE (2017) and BONTJE and SLINGER's (2017) *what* question mirrors their descriptive interest in the individual and aggregated narratives of actors involved in the case. On the other hand, the *how* question formulated by AUKES (2017) and AUKES et al. (2017) is indicative of the processual nature of their research design. In addition, the subject of BONTJE (2017) and BONTJE and SLINGER's (2017) question—"retrospective accounts" (BONTJE, 2017, p.93)—denotes a sensemaking product, while the "interpretive policy entrepreneur" (AUKES et al., 2017, p.2), the subject of AUKES (2017) and AUKES et al.'s (2017) research question, refers to an actor. This, too, indicates the difference in dynamics between the two methods. In other words, the narrative analysis led BONTJE and SLINGER (2017) to products of actors' interpretive acts, while AUKES et al. (2017) uncovered those acts themselves with their framing analysis. [18]

#### 4.3 Data generation

The selection of interviewees reflects the methods' objectives: On the one hand, for their narrative analysis, which was after a broader social reflection of the case in the outcome biographies. BONTJE and SLINGER (2017) selected interviewees from governmental organizations as well as civil society. On the other hand, AUKES et al.'s (2017) interviewee choice for the framing analysis was restricted to actors who had specifically participated in the decision-making about the case to shed light on the argumentative struggles that took place during the process. Both BONTJE and SLINGER (2017) and AUKES et al. (2017) chose to ask qualitative questions during their interviews. AUKES et al.'s aim of finding decisive moments in the decision-making process required the thematic limitation of semi-structured interviews for the framing analysis. BONTJE and SLINGER (2017) used open narrative interviewing to allow interviewees complete freedom in the choice of themes and to let them tell their own case story. [19]

#### 4.4 Data analysis and product

The beginning of the analytical process was similar for both methods. BONTJE and SLINGER (2017) as well as AUKES et al. (2017) defined concepts to code their transcripts for notable aspects of narrative and framing processes. In the narrative analysis, the sequencing of events, the spatial orientation, time span, and problem-solution structure were central to the analysis. The deconstructed individual accounts were re-"storified" on a more aggregate level, taking into account the identified similarities and differences. For the framing analysis, AUKES et al. reconstructed the case timeline to find dissonant events in the case. These events revealed frame changes due to framing interactions. [20]

The narrative analysis process resulted in three aggregated narratives. By means of this method, the individual experiences of policy actors and other stakeholders were transformed into aggregate biographies of the case by comparing similarities and differences between individual accounts. In doing so, three ways of historically explaining the evolution of the case developed, as was targeted in the epistemological premises. In the framing analysis, the interview accounts were converted into a table of interactional framing mechanisms which changed the epistemic community. These framing interactions could be linked to a specific actor, making the conceptualization of a specific kind of actor—the interpretive policy entrepreneur—another result of applying the method. Both methods may also lead to new types of narratives, interpretive actors or framing mechanisms. [21]

#### 4.5 Limitations and epistemological traveling

Both methods are broadly applicable in a diversity of policy sectors. The methods focus on generic human sense-making and communication mechanisms, which can be expected to be similar across policy sectors. There is a difference regarding the scale level at which the methods may be applied. BONTJE (2017) and BONTJE and SLINGER (2017) used the narrative analysis to aggregate individual narratives to a more abstract level to cover broader, more societal narratives—perhaps akin to discourses. Although the method was lifted to a higher scale level by scanning for similarities in individual narratives, this method can also be used at a micro-scale without the aggregation process. This variant of the narrative analysis method could also account for successes or failures on a lower policy process level. It is more difficult to imagine the framing analysis method at a higher scale level due to its focus on micro-level interactions. It might be possible to aggregate framing interactions at higher societal levels and observe conflicts between different types of frames. But from our point of view, frame shifts originate in the micro-scale interactions between organizations or their employees. The application of different versions of framing analysis in other fields of study, such as food security (CANDEL, BREEMAN, STILLER & TERMEER, 2014), industrial policy (DUDLEY, 1999), health (GREENAWAY, 2011), communication (BORAH, 2011) or social movements (GALLO-CRUZ, 2012), testifies to the concept's methodical versatility. [22]

The choices about ontological premises that were made at the outset limit the traveling capability of the methods. In principle, it is conceivable that narrative or framing analysis could be applied in a single-reality ontological context. In such an approach, one would need to assume the existence of one true narrative or frame, according to some measure of truth. Other, untrue narratives and frames would be intentionally or unintentionally confounding. These could be termed "lies," "bias" or "alternative facts." However, the way in which the presently compared methods were developed is incompatible with a single truth or reality. Both rely on different interpretations of realities based on the selection and weighing of some aspects of reality vis-à-vis others (ENTMAN, 1993). This also implies that there may be more than one plausible, irreducible interpretation of reality (GOODMAN, 1978). Hence, neither of the methods as developed by BONTJE (2017) and BONTJE and SLINGER (2017) or AUKES (2017) and AUKES et al. (2017) can be used for a philosophical stance that is not accepting a pluralist ontology. [23]

## **5. "Narrative and Storytelling" vs. "Frame and Framing"**

It is advisable to dig a little deeper into the terminological clarification and distinction of the concepts involved in the comparison. Particularly, the distinctions between "frame" and "narrative" as well as between "framing" and "storytelling" is of interest. In an analytical context, the distinction between the pairs of nouns and verbs is of considerable importance. First, "narrative" and "frame" arguably operate on different levels. If a frame is understood as an actor's perspective, the narrative would be the corresponding expression of the frame. Frames serve as the underlying foundations on which narratives are expressed. Understood in this sense, one should be careful not to use the concepts interchangeably. [24]

BONTJE (2017) and BONTJE and SLINGER's (2017) definition of narrative focuses on individuals' experiences and the story form, in which these experiences are often retold by individuals. The same goes for frames, which can also be studied from such an individual perspective. Similar to the narrative analysis in BONTJE and BONTJE and SLINGER, frames can be compared to find similarities and differences and to evaluate their compatibility. Both types of analyses focus on the substantive content of individuals' experiences, also called a "mentalist" perspective (RECKWITZ, 2002, p.204). [25]

However, both verb forms "framing" and "storytelling" transcend the mentalist perspective. Other actors have to be introduced into the equation. "Framing" happens over a subject, mediated through individual frames, between at least two individuals. This is the essential difference between "frame" and "framing." To understand "framing" as communicating with others through one's frame means that as soon as "framing" moves front and center, communication and inevitably interaction with other individuals becomes relevant. From an argumentative point of view, studying the mechanisms of "framing" entails gaining insight in the back-and-forth trading of arguments between individuals, the development of conviction among the involved, and, therefore, the convergence or divergence

over certain subjects. This makes "framing" an inherently political process and emphasizes its suitability for policy and political analysis. Nevertheless, a similar claim can be made for "storytelling." When studying how stories are told, researchers may discover the adaptability of narratives. The political storyteller chooses the angle of the story depending on the situation. Listeners interpret that story with their own frames and can "pass it on to others in ways that are meaningful and relevant to them" (VAN DER STOEP, 2014, p.43; see also BAKER, 2010; VAN DIJK, 2011). This elasticity of narratives constitutes their relevance for study, especially in a continuous research design. As BONTJE (2017) shows, the elasticity of narratives can be employed to study developments in the governance context of a project, such as the Sand Engine. For both political actions, i.e., framing and storytelling, a well-developed sense for others' frames is necessary (AUKES et al., 2017; MINTROM & NORMAN, 2009). This closeness and similarity may leave the reader wondering what the difference between the two acts may be. The distinction is in what one is looking for in the data. While a framing analysis examines the argumentative level of interviewees' accounts, a storytelling analysis approaches those accounts as wholes and tries to find the overarching structure. On the other hand, this closeness also explains why VAN HULST and YANOW (2014) take storytelling to be an element of the act of framing. It is the transition between making sense of a situation and expressing that in a structured way to the outside world. [26]

Thus, both framing and narrative approaches enable an interactive perspective on argumentative power struggles. But the focus of the narrative analysis on individual experiences and their dissociated coexistence makes it a more detached method. The framing analysis with its focus on framing interactions has a larger action component; there is more happening, when actors' realities interact, clash, mingle, converge, or part. From this perspective, "narratives" and "frames" are mentalist concepts, whereas "framing" and "storytelling" are intersubjectivist (DEWULF & BOUWEN, 2012; DEWULF et al., 2009; VAN HULST & YANOW, 2014). [27]

## 6. Conclusion

In this article, we shed light on the conceptual distinctions as well as potential methodological distinctions between one narrative method and one framing method (BONTJE, 2017; BONTJE & SLINGER, 2017; AUKES (2017); AUKES et al., 2017). The two contextually-developed methods described above were applied in the same empirical research setting of an innovative large infrastructural technology, the Sand Engine on the Dutch coast. Both methods were contrasted based on a comparative framework predominantly drawn from philosophy of science. The main contribution of this article is the empirical application of two related methods to the same case, which has conceptual, empirical, and methodological consequences. First and conceptually, we resolved the conceptual confusion found in the literature. As our comparative analysis reflects—and running counter to common usage (see introduction)—the two concepts of narrative and frame should indeed not be used interchangeably. Thus, conceptually speaking, a frame may be understood as an actor's

perspective itself, while a narrative is a product of that perspective. The root of the conceptual confusion stems from the act of storytelling as it represents the link between the two concepts. Storytelling, i.e., the expression of a frame in a "storified" structure, represents a "textualization" of formerly pre-linguistic ideas about a policy situation. We explained the nuanced differences of the two concepts, but acknowledges their closeness. We show that distinguishing the concepts is not only necessary, but also that refraining from doing so opens the door to invalid drawing of conclusions. For future research, it would be useful to more systematically relate other concepts and related methods, e.g., "discourse," to the two discussed here. Second and empirically, applying these albeit related methods to the same empirical case constitutes a unique opportunity to demonstrate the different analytical results the methods produce. The narrative analysis applied to the Sand Engine elucidated in which different overarching structures the innovative technology of mega-nourishment schemes has been taken up by various actors. The framing analysis on the other hand shed light on the politics occurring between actors on the argumentative level. We have shown that the two methods do not produce similar results. They do, however, complement each other. If possible, in the future it would be interesting to apply other additional methods—such as grounded theory methodology or discourse analysis—to one empirical case to add nuance to the existing knowledge of similarities and differences between these methods. Third and methodologically, applying both methods to the Sand Engine case has produced a unique analytical situation which enabled us to not only produce rich results regarding the argumentative politics and societal uptake of mega-nourishment schemes, but also to transcend the empirical level and compare these methods on a methodological level. Although the methods appear similar at first glance, analyzing them with our comparative framework revealed that they differ considerably when the methodological veil is lifted. *Nota bene*, the analysis does not and cannot cover all conceivable versions of the two methods. In the future, the comparative framework can be used to enrich methodological knowledge about various kinds of methods, perhaps even contributing to a more systematic typology of constructivist methods. This would not only strengthen the framework's suitability for other methods, but also open it up for criticism and adaptation wherever necessary. [28]

Although we disentangled the conceptual confusion described in the introduction and grounded a methodological comparative treatment of methods based on these concepts in an empirical case, choosing what form of narrative or framing analysis suits a certain research context or fits a research strategy is another issue. As we have hinted, there are many analytical features of narratives and frames that may become more salient in one specific research context than in others. In research practice there is a continuum of conceivable forms of both types of analyses. In turn, the choice for narrative or frame analysis and which form of these cannot be made deductively. The researcher in question needs to decide what is of interest and what is the best approach based on the specific research context. In the article, we provided concrete practical insights and a comparative framework to guide such research choices. [29]

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